

Sir Wilfrid Laurier; An Appreciation

PETER McARTHUR, a Toronto newspaper man, was a passionate admirer of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and now that the time has come for writing biographies of that distinguished Canadian it is only natural Mr. McArthur should make his work laudatory in the extreme. His actual sketch of Sir Wilfrid's life is comparatively brief, the greater part of the text being composed of anecdotes, appraisements by individuals and newspapers at home and abroad, "notable utterances" gathered from Laurier's speeches and indications of his personal characteristics.

The son of the French-Canadian farmer who was born at St. Lin, Quebec, in 1841, of a family originally named Cottineau, but "called Champaurier," had the great advantage of being educated first in his native tongue and then, still a small boy, of spending a few years in the Scotch Presbyterian village of New Glasgow, where his eyes were "first opened to the wealth of English literature" and where he got his degree of Bachelor of Civil Law. He was called to the Quebec bar in the same year—1864. But his real life work began in 1871, when he was elected member of the Quebec Legislature. From that point his life and Canadian politics are inseparable. This biographer touches lightly on Sir Wilfrid's last defeat on the conscription issue in 1917—as might be expected, since it was only natural that Laurier should take the stand he did, in view of his antecedent faiths and principles.

No one can put this little book down without admiring the subject of it for his unrelenting industry and for the brilliancy of his political leadership, but most of all for his marked ability as a statesman who saw his great country in a great way. One of the very human anecdotes in the book is that revealing the innate theatricalism which must be a part of a leader—the incident of Sir Wilfrid deliberately using a chair that would place him at a lower level than a visitor at his home whom Laurier wanted to impress, so that when he (Sir Wilfrid) rose his height would seem more imposing even than it naturally was. W. B. McC.

SIR WILFRID LAURIER. By Peter McArthur. Toronto, Canada: J. M. Dent & Sons.

Elves From Australia

RARE fays and will-o'-the-wisps, elfin knights and jack-o'-lanterns all fled to the light of the Southern Cross, according to a very learned Prof. Strong of the University of Melbourne, taking up their abode in the land of the kangaroo. For several centuries, he says, they hid themselves from mortal vision, after leaving roundhead, unromantic England. But at least two true believers discovered them and told all about them just when they were needed the most—in those terrible days when Daddies and Uncles and Big, Big Brothers had marched away to war.

It was in October, 1916, that *Elves and Fairies* came from the equally poetic pens of two Australian sisters, Annie R. Rentoul, who told in fair words, and Ida Rentoul Outhwaite, with a magic drawing pen, of the wee folk who remained to protect small boys and small girls from all the terrors of childhood.

So appealing and popular was this collection throughout Australia that the annals of the little people, rediscovered and charted, have been borne over the Seven Seas of America.

The drawings should win a high place as an illustrator for their maker, while the simple charm of the lyrics shows again that sweet English is spoken and written in the Southern Hemisphere as well as in the land of green fields and ancient hedgerows.

Such queer birds and beasts as an Australian fairyland has will delight thousands of children in America and Europe. Think of them: Billabongs; Boomerang Spirits; Kookaburras; Wallahys and Plannel-flowers, growing under the Ti-trees.

ELVES AND FAIRIES. By Ida Rentoul Outhwaite. Verses by Annie R. Rentoul. Melbourne, Australia: Lothian Book Publishing Company, Ltd.

THE Yale University Press announces the publication of a complete, definitive edition of the poetic works of Robert Underwood Johnson—five books in one volume.

An Izaak With Bought Fish

By BENJAMIN DE CASSERES.

THE popular Izaak Walton go out every month in droves to the deep sea Fishing Banks loaded to the water's edge with bait. They bring back the same string of fish. Many have lost the hooks and drosses of their common sense.

Some say they saw the Flying Dutchman on his odd tub Immortality. Others are frank enough to confess that the bait they got turned out to be their own toes. But they are a happy bunch, generally speaking, and they add a lot to the book reviewer's income. Flippant but true! However, of the living let us speak nothing but good; but as for the dead, damned and paradise-past, I have never come across, through the ouija board, the planchette, the tipping table and some swamis, a more unconscionable band of liars since I last visited Congress.

Has any one ever computed the vastness of the catastrophe of the discovery that the soul is really immortal? Is there an imagination vast enough to picture such a calamity? So long as no one knows anything for certain about the next world, or whether there is really any such place, guesswork becomes, as it is, a great and pleasurable pastime.

In fact, "the immortality of the soul" is the vastest verbal and mental gamble ever engaged in by the race of man. The mystery of life after death has made the trouble of being born worth while. It is really the grave and the secret it holds that give life its tang. I have never questioned the wisdom of the Omnipotent as long as it remains Puzzle Editor of the Scroll of Time. Praise be that it has never descended to the depths of a "Questions and Answers" editor! O Grave, where is thy victory! O Death, where is thy sting! If I don't know anything about either! Hope is the Monte Carlo of the damned; but Monte Carlo is a pleasant place.

About the catastrophe of finding out that the soul is really immortal: It would destroy the livelihood of thousands of writers, editors, readers and printers. It would be a bad thing for the churches, for it would make faith unnecessary. It would reduce all our great achievements to rubbish; for what value has, for instance, the discovery of radium if we are going to a world where it will be as common as sugar used to be here? Making immortality a sure thing for all would open the way for an epidemic of suicide. Who would pay his debts or bother about being evicted if he could slide over into the Fourth Dimension with a gas tube? The disaster would be greater than universal Bolshevism.

Personally, I love this life so much, I have got so much drama, poetry, tears, laughter, black eyes and flattery out of it up to date, that I really don't care a platoon damn whether I'm done for when I'm done or whether I've really only begun. I have too profound a faith in the inscrutable's processes to bother about it.

In this connection it may be noted that imaginations of the first order do not bother themselves overmuch about immortality. It is a realm of speculation that is entered by third and fourth rate minds—men to whom a daisy is a daisy; men who see nothing magical, miraculous or immortal in the spectacles of this world or the dumfounding and confounding mystery of the stellar universe; men who do not feel the ghostliness of the hair on the back of their hands; scientists, business men and the unimaginative generally. Shakespeare used ghosts for dramatic effect to heighten the mystery of reality. Another world cannot explain this one any more than man explains the monkey or the monkey a butterfly. Science is running to psychic phenomena to-day because it is sick of its crucibles and spectroscopes; the unimaginative scientist has bolted for the Empyrean. But there are more mysteries in the matter that constitutes Sir Oliver Lodge's body than were ever dreamed of among his mediums and controls. The trouble with science is that it has denied spirit; while as a matter of fact there is nothing else in this universe. It is the return to India.

The Rev. Samuel McComb is the latest Izaak to go a-angling in the waters of psychic phenomena. His book is called *The Future Life in the Light of Modern Inquiry*. Sorry to relate, he has not returned with a single catch—not even with a herring. The good doctor met a lot of

deep sea fishermen returning from the Fishing Banks and bought their strings. He met Felix Adler, A. J. Balfour, Henri Bergson, Besant, Browning, Carlyle, Edward Clodd, Mrs. Piper, Plato, Lodge, Coleridge, Democritus, John Tyndall, Pascal, Karl Marx, Andrew Lang, John W. Karma, Lucius Hyslop, William James, Stanley Hall, Camille Flammarion, F. W. H. Myers, the primordial W. E. Gladstone—a goodly crowd—all bound for the nearest Teague Sovietetters, and who sold their catches right readily to the good doctor.

The good doctor discourses on the soul at the getway. His definition of "soul" is somewhat eclectic. Does the "soul" survive the body? Of course it does. The author of *Festus* says so. Extremists left. Curtain. Here endeth the first act, children.

Immortality and the Modern Man is Chapter II. Now, what immortality has to do with the modern man I cannot see. Was Huxley any more modern than Buddha? Is Hyslop any nearer the front in the Truth headline than St. Augustine? Here the good doctor is on surer ground, for he says the universe is spiritual, not material. In other words, man is duller to-day than he was ten thousand years ago. The Hindu knew we were spirits long before the Occidental denied it. We are progressing toward the ancients. The good doctor is going along.

Then follow chapter after chapter to the extent of ten, in which the old "arguments" for the immortality of the soul are revamped—as though argument had anything to do with it. It is plentifully smug, and the ouija board gets in its loquacious work. Did it ever occur to the good doctor that the "next sphere" might be lower than this one? Perish the thought! A job's a job. These "ghosts" and "spirits" may be nothing but habit shells loafing around the places where the living "died." If you grasp Bishop Berkeley and Spinoza, you have no need of the Society for Psychical Research. If the Kingdom of God is within us—and I believe it is—why all these excursions to the Coney Island of mysticism to discover him? The good doctor hankers too much for miracles, methinks.

The appearance of a brand new genius makes the world believe that either it or the genius is an idiot. Both the world and the good doctor are safe, so far as this book shows.

THE FUTURE LIFE. By THE REV. SAMUEL McComb. Dodd, Mead & Co.

Is Greece Like This?

WHEN you open a book of short stories and in the very first find a girl embracing the bones of a dead lover which she has exhumed from the graveyard at midnight you inevitably order an extra portion of black coffee and prepare to make a night of it. That is the way *Tales of a Cruel Country*, by Gerald Cumberland, opens. Greece, modern Greece, is the cruel country in question, and its cruelty, if a judgment may be based upon this book, consists principally of a code of morals rather more degraded than is popularly accredited to any country west of Suez. Not that all Mr. Cumberland's stories contain ghoulies, or even vampires, male or female, but that a goodly number of them depend for their thrill upon a somewhat debased sexual ethic.

Plain speaking is always sure of a hearing, theoretically at least; and this author leaves few plain things regarding his characters unspoken. Since Greece is still in a more or less primitive stage of modern development, perhaps there is no unfairness in the impression Mr. Cumberland gives that the dramatic values of Greek life are almost wholly of the violent or physical sort.

Structurally speaking the stories leave much to be desired—that is, if we are meant to accept them as "tales." With rare exceptions they fail to satisfy the dramatic sense. The mise-en-scene and character portrayal are skilfully done, but things are not brought to a satisfactory conclusion. The fiction and two or three others escape this amateurish lack. Altogether the exotic flavor and faulty form of Mr. Cumberland's *Tales* leave the reader with the feeling that he has done justice neither to his subject nor to his art. If Greece is really like that we despair of its future as a civilized nation. C. M. G.

TALES OF A CRUEL COUNTRY. By Gerald Cumberland. Brentano's.

Rules for the Game Of Being American

GOFFREY PARSONS'S *Fair Play* is an elemental story, prepared especially for young people. It could be called a text book. But, dear me, a text book is a dull book to be studied and not an interesting book to be read in order to be glad and proud of being an American.

The playground analogy is a happy one; nor is it forced, as it easily might have been. But every boy knows what "Fair Play" means on the school ground and how necessary it is to follow the rules as they have been laid down by the majority. The central idea of Mr. Parsons's book is that America offers Fair Play for everyone who knows and is willing to abide by the rules. Not everyone, of course, in this polyglot country of ours knows the rules, or, knowing them, is willing to abide by them. The 249 alien revolutionists and anarchists who sailed away on the Buford the other day either did not know them or refused to abide by them—and so they don't abide. The rules may be summed up as liberty under the law; freedom through the laws the majority of the people have agreed upon. Laine does not believe in majority rule or democracy. He believes in a fighting minority that knows what the people want better than they know themselves. This may be a perfectly good doctrine, but it does not happen to be the American doctrine. As Mr. Parsons says:

"Orderly compliance with law and with the will of the majority are the foundation of our whole system. Destroy that foundation and you destroy America."

With it also, as Mr. Parsons adds, you would destroy the greatest degree of liberty that has ever yet been attained by fallible and imperfect human beings. It might have been well if the Buford had been liberally stocked with copies of Mr. Parsons's *Fair Play*. It is written simply and with a remarkable degree of persuasiveness. It should make an American who reads it travel hopefully and with confidence, and it should be in every American boy's library. N. P. D.

FAIR PLAY. By Goffrey Parsons. Charles Scribner's Sons.

A Good Boy Scout Tale

A PLEASANT, wholesome tale this, of *The Hilltop Troop*, by Arthur Stanwood Pier. The fortunate boys of the Hill are at daggers drawn with the less favored lads of the Hollow. These small enmities are growing fast in rancor and danger, when some of the older boys of the Hill form a Boy Scout troop. How the cooperation taught in the Scout Law and in Scout tasks brings out the best in the boys and increases the pleasure and interest of their days is breezily told. The antagonism among the gang in the Hollow is finally overcome after some exciting incidents.

Michael of the Hollow is an engaging lad, his natural earnestness and uprightness kept from becoming obnoxious by his boyish manliness. Reggie of the Hill, the "villain" of the piece, enhances the pleasing qualities of his companions at the expense of probability. For he is really quite impossible and unnecessarily the "mud" and the squealer. Otherwise the portrayal of boy nature seems admirably true, and is always amusing. If the Scout laws could, and should, ever forbid entirely the merciless "kidding" of one another on which boys thrive (and which is so very refreshing to the restrained adult) it would be a great pity. M. P. A.

THE HILLTOP TROOP. By Arthur Stanwood Pier. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

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